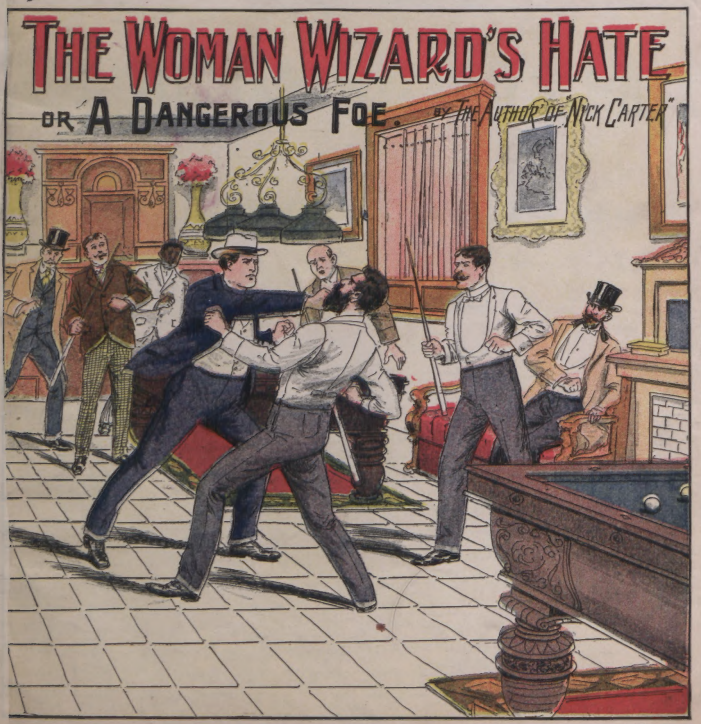
NEW
NICK CARTER
WEEKLY

Issued Weekly. By Subscription $2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at New York Post Office by STREET & SMITH, 238 William St., N. Y.

No. 417. Price, Five Cents.

THE WOMAN WIZARD'S HATE
OR A DANGEROUS FOE.

By "The Author of Nick Carter"



Nick Carter's instant reply was to strike out with such terrific force that the doctor was lifted from his feet and knocked backward under the table.

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THE WOMAN WIZARD'S HATE

OR,

A Dangerous Foe.

Edited by CHICKERING CARTER.

CHAPTER I.

THE FACE OF AN ANGEL; THE SOUL OF A DEVIL.

Zanoni, the woman wizard, was in prison, awaiting trial for the murder of her own sister, Minerva Peyton, the wife of Albert Peyton.

And Dr. Quartz, the terror of all mankind, the poisoner, the vivisectionist, the master of all sciences—the handsome, polished, suave, smooth-tongued, soft-voiced murderer—where was he?

The world supposed him dead.

He had been hanged by the neck until he was pronounced dead by the doctors who attended the execution, and his body, lying in a tool house of the prison yard, had been carried away by a cyclone during the night, so that all trace of it was lost.

There was only one man among the thousands who were familiar with the history of Dr. Quartz who held serious doubts concerning his death, and that man was Nick Carter.

And yet, even Nick Carter was not sufficiently firm in his conviction that the doctor still lived, to give the thought the emphasis of emphatic statement.

Reason told him that the doctor could not be alive; argument preponderated so heavily upon the side of his death that there was afforded no answering logic to contend against it.

Patsy and Ten-Ichi had each believed they saw Dr. Quartz at the same instant but in different places, and later Nick Carter had convinced them that they had

been made the victims of an old East Indian trick performed by Zanoni.

Nick Carter had believed he saw him on the night of Zanoni's arrest; but at that time the woman wizard had boldly asserted that she was performing the trick she had played on Patsy and Ten-Ichi, and now, because Nick Carter had been at the time suffering from the effects of a drug administered hypodermically by Zanoni while he was unconscious, and because of his weakened condition resulting therefrom, he sometimes doubted if he had really seen the man after all.

And later, that same evening, when the effects of the drug had partly worn away so that the detective could rise to his feet and seize hold of Zanoni—while the strength that had returned to him was only in his fingers so that he could simply cling to her and hold her by them alone, while yet there was not sufficient strength returned to his arms to keep her from striking him again and again in the face until she drew blood with her puny blows—she had called out for aid, and it had seemed to Nick that Dr. Quartz appeared for an instant in a doorway, and that he had cried out his name to him.

But after all the entire incident was a dazed and uncertain quantity in his mind.

The drug injected into his veins by Zanoni had still befuddled his brain; every mental quality he was possessed of had been at that time concentrated upon the effort of will to hold the prisoner he had seized while he was yet too weak to do so, and the period of utter exhaustion that had followed upon the experience had left the memory of it all in his mind only as one remembers a dream of the night; therefore, Nick Carter was uncertain.

He admitted to himself that he believed Dr. Quartz to be alive, but he did not insist upon that belief to any other person—not even to the one whom he trusted most of all others—Chick.

Uncertainty upon any subject which came into Nick Carter's life, was a rare experience with him, and one not to be long endured; and he was, therefore, determined to become his own client and his own detective, and for the sake of his own personal satisfaction, if for no other reason, to solve the mystery.

Zanoni was a prisoner in the Tombs, and it was a week to a day when Nick Carter called upon her there—the day before our national Decoration Day.

At his request, she was brought down to the consulting room and they were locked in there together while the prison guard went away about his other duties.

The week of confinement in the prison had rendered Zanoni even more beautiful than ever, if that were possible. Her great, somber, black eyes glowed strangely in the gloom of the consultation room. Her lithe figure, as graceful at once as a panther and a snake, glided into his presence as noiselessly as a shadow, and her exquisite face, which seemed utterly incapable of belonging to one so steeped in crime as she was, was as calm, as smiling, and as filled with an expression of welcome as if that consultation room had been her parlor and she was the recipient of an honored guest.

Nick looked upon her and wondered when she entered the room.

"What new attitude is this which she has assumed now?" he asked himself; for there was a suggestion of repression, of method, of art, of intense purpose in the air around her. It seemed to exude from her person together with the perfume which the prison matrons had not denied her.

It was instantly evident to Nick that Zanoni had already laid some plan of campaign by which she hoped to avoid the consequences of her crimes, and that he was, himself, part and parcel with that plan.

And yet, in having her committed there, Nick Carter had directed that every precaution be taken to hold her.

He had warned the inspector—and through him the prison officials—that Zanoni was the master of a thousand and one devices, any one of which, if she were given an opportunity to make use of it, might afford her a means of escape from custody.

He had cautioned them that no matter what she asked for in her prison cell, it should be positively and emphatically denied to her.

He had insisted that the matrons should strip her of every garment she wore at the time of her arrest, and that she be provided with new clothing throughout; and this extra precaution was taken in order to offset the possibility of her having concealed about her, in some inconceivable place, the powder of one of those potent drugs which she knew so well how to use.

He had begged that she might never be left without a guard of at least three persons, for the reason that she had already demonstrated her power to influence two persons through the exercise of her extraordinary hypnotic powers.

All of these precautions had been taken—and more, and Zanoni had now been a prisoner an entire week; a docile prisoner, too.

True, the prison authorities had relented a little—just a very little.

Zanoni had asked for her favorite perfume, and it had been procured at Hudnut's and given to her. She had asked that she be served with black tea—India tea —instead of the mixed beverage which was supplied to her at first, and she had received it. She had asked for various kinds of sweetmeats and candies, of course, supplying the money with which they were purchased, and the prison authorities had sent to Huyler's for them. She had asked for a box of La Blache powder, for her complexion, and she had received it. She had been dissatisfied with the brush and comb provided by the prison for dressing her sumptuous wealth of sloe-black hair, and the brush and comb had been changed and changed, again and again, until she at last declared herself satisfied.

And so she had gone on down through a considerable list of little things, each utterly innocent in itself, each easily procurable, and each without a suggestion with it of ulterior motive in desiring it, until her prison cell, at the end of that first week of her imprisonment, was quite thoroughly stocked, and she had ceased to request added favors, save only the one included in her continual and constant desire for candies.

And her taste in candies varied amazingly. It was rarely that she called for the same kind twice, so that at the end of the seven days preceding Nick Carter's call, she had about run the gamut of Huyler's and Snow's supplies.

Nick Carter was ignorant of all this.

He had requested that she be supplied with nothing whatever from the outside, and he supposed his wish had been honored until she glided into the consultation room of the prison, and he caught a breath of a perfume of the East which he had always noticed about her, and which he knew was not on the prison list of supplies.

He knew that Zanoni's nerves were like steel. He knew that her courage was dauntless. He knew that her fund of resource was exhaustless. He knew that her adaptability was as wide as the earth, and that her adeptness was profound. But, nevertheless, he saw in her manner as she entered the room, a complacency which did not fit well with her incarceration in the Tombs; a self-assured air which told him as plainly as words could have done, that there was somewhere a plan, a scheme, a hope, based upon some tangible reason, that she would not be compelled to wait upon the cold judgment of her fellow man for the crimes she had committed and helped to commit; and so he asked himself:

"What new attitude is this which she has assumed now?"

"I expected you long before this time, Mr. Carter," she said, in her wonderfully soft and evenly modulated voice. "Why have you kept me waiting so long?"

"Waiting?" replied Nick. "Were you waiting?"

She smiled archly upon him.

"I suppose that is hardly the word," she said, "for it is true that I would not have waited had there been no impediment to my departure. I should, perhaps, have used the word expected. But the question remains the same."

"Am I to deduct from that question the idea that you wish to see me?" asked Nick.

"Certainly."

"Why?"

She shrugged her shoulders. Then she laughed.

"Let us say it is because I wished to know if you had recovered from the wounds which my little fists

and nails inflicted upon your face at the time of our last meeting. Will that do?"

"Admirably."

"I never could understand your sudden access of strength against the drug I had given you at that time," she said, musingly. "I should have said that you would remain its prisoner for twelve hours at least; and yet it wore away—or a part of it did—within one hour."

Then, with a quick change of the subject, she added:

"How horrid of you to have my own clothing taken from me, and to force me to wear those ill-fitting garments. I must look a fright."

"Nothing, no matter how ill fitting, could render you otherwise than beautiful, Zanoni," said Nick, coldly. "I make this reply to you because I know you expected it and wished it."

"You pay me a compliment, and spoil it in the same breath," she pouted.

"And you wear the face of an angel and carry around with you the soul of a devil," he retorted. "So you see we are even."

"Suppose I should tell you that my heart is changed, now that I see death staring me in the face?" she asked, with a mischievous twinkle in her black eyes.

"I should not believe you."

"Suppose I should tell you that I had forgiven you, as well as all my enemies?"

"I should not believe you."

"Suppose I should tell you that I hate you more than ever? that this smiling countenance I show to you is a lie, and that I could ask for no greater happiness than that of the privilege of striking you dead at my feet, here?"

"I should believe that, certainly."

She laughed as a schoolgirl might have laughed.

"What a big booby you are, Nick Carter," she said.

"Why?"

She came closer to him and touched him on the shoulder with her shell-like hand; and he recoiled beyond the reach of it.

"Perhaps some day I will tell you," she said, dreaming into his eyes with her own.

"Surely, Zanoni," he said, contemptuously, "you are not going to make love to me, are you? I assure you the effort will be useless."

For one brief instant there was a gleam out of her eyes which almost made him dodge, so filled was it with menace and utter hate; but she laughed and shrugged her shoulders, and she replied with equal contempt:

"Have no fear, my pretty man, my little giant, my cornucopia of driveling goodness. When I make love to you, it will be to your articulated skeleton; to your empty, fleshless skull—to your heart preserved in alcohol and your liver thrown to the dogs. Bah! Nick Carter. Do you think you have conquered Zanoni? Don't deceive yourself, for I may surprise you."

CHAPTER II.

THE VERY OLD MAN IN THE CORRIDOR.

"Don't you think that we waste time in making idle threats, Zanoni?" asked Nick, smiling at her vehemence.

"Assuredly," she admitted. "Why did you come here to see me?"

"Because I had an idea that you would tell me something about Dr. Quartz."

"What could I possibly tell you about him which you do not already know?" she asked, with deep sarcasm.

"Much," replied Nick. "For instance, where is he now?"

"Why, according to your belief, he should be stating inside the furnace into which lesser criminals are shoveling coal," she laughed.

"Is he living, or dead?"

She laughed quite heartily this time.

"Surely you know as much about that as I do," she said.

"I thought I did until the night of your arrest," he admitted.

"What! Do you remember my little trick?"

"Yes; and I also remember that during your struggle with me, you called upon him to help you, swearing that if he did not come, you would betray him."

e came—as far as the door, but he came no further. He did not come to your aid."

Again she laughed—this time, derisively.

"If you saw him, why do you ask me if he is living?" she demanded.

"Because my brain was disordered by the drug you had given me; because I was not then and am not now sure of anything that occurred in that room that night, save that I caught and held you fast until Chick came."

"Well?" she inquired, tantalizingly.

"I came because I thought you might have something to say to me on the subject."

She came suddenly a step nearer to him.

"You would not believe me no matter what I might say to you," she said, "so why should I say anything at all?"

"I would study the expression of your eyes and the tone of your voice when you said it," replied Nick, coolly, "and from one or the other I could gather an idea of the truth."

"Do you think so? Very well. I will tell you two things, and you may take your choice of believing either which you prefer. The first is this: Dr. Quartz is alive and well. He escaped the hangman, was blown away by a cyclone and set down at my feet in the middle of the night, in a place called Utopia, and is now my abject slave. Do you believe that?"

"Never mind. What is the other thing?"

"The other thing is, if Dr. Quartz is alive, I do not know it. If he escaped the hangman, the cyclone and the freezing night, he has not seen fit to call upon me and tell me about it. Do you believe that?"

"Do you know, Zanoni," said Nick, musingly, without replying to her question; "I sometimes wish that I had not captured you that night in Rivington Street."

"So do I; most heartily."

"If you were at liberty now, I could——"

"You could walk into another trap which I would set for you, as you walked into that one, like a booby."

"Is that what you mean?"

"Partly."

"Is that all you wished to ask me?"

"Not quite. Where did you procure your perfume, Zanoni?"

She started a little at that.

"One of the matrons purchased it for me; why?" she replied.

"Has that matron been equally kind in purchasing other things for you?"

"Why, yes. A few things."

"Such as—what? You need not reply if you prefer not, for I can easily get the information elsewhere."

"Why should I not reply? Is there harm in eating candy? In drinking tea? In performing the necessary duties of my toilet?"

"Not necessarily; but, Zanoni, there are sometimes ingredients in candies, and tea, and other things which an expert chemist like yourself can make use of."

"Very well," she said, looking boldly into his eyes and coming a step nearer to him. "If it is your pleasure to persecute me, now that you have me in prison, do so. Come to my cell and take from me the few comforts I have. Take away my candy, my—bah! You are a brute, are you not? Your goodness is only skin deep after all."

She turned her back upon him and crossed to the grated iron door which opened upon the corridor, leaning against it; and as she turned away, she dropped her handkerchief on the floor.

Two gentlemen were passing that grated door at the very instant she reached it; one of them was a very old man and the other was a prominent lawyer of the city, and the very old man had been attacked by a paroxysm of coughing a moment before.

They passed the grated door while Nick Carter bent forward to recover the handkerchief Zanoni had dropped, and they paused, side by side, and looked in upon the fair prisoner as they were passing, and just as Nick Carter raised himself again and looked out upon them.

But the very old man was half hidden from his sight by the figure of Zanoni, and his face was also turned away at that instant. Moreover, Nick paid no attention to him, for his attention was taken up by the law-

yer, whom he knew and recognized and to whom he bowed.

He scarcely saw the old man at all; he merely remembered, long afterward, that there had been one there with the lawyer at the time.

And then Zanoni turned and faced him again.

"Who was that man?" she asked of Nick. "The tall one, I mean."

"Richard Hartleigh, the criminal lawyer. There are always clients of his in this place."

"Ah! I have no counsel as yet. Would he not be a good one for me?"

"Excellent," replied Nick.

"Would you take a message to him for me?"

"No. There are messengers in the prison whom you can send."

She laughed, almost gleefully.

"Zanoni," said Nick, interrupting her, "I came here to-day, more at the request of Albert Peyton, the husband of your sister whom you murdered, than for any other reason."

"Indeed! What does Albert want of me? For he must want something."

"He wished me to say for him—mind I do not say it for myself—that he hoped you would decide to confess the murder of your sister, and so take imprisonment for life, instead of going to the electric chair, which you so richly deserve."

"Why does he wish that?"

"I did not ask him."

"I will tell you. Simply because he does not wish to have a Galena—his wife's maiden name and therefore my name—because he does not desire that a sister of his wife should die in the electric chair. Ho! ho! Isn't that it?"

"I suppose it is."

"Go back to him, Nick Carter, and tell him that he need not worry. Tell him that Zanoni Galena will not die in the electric chair. Tell him also that neither will she go to any prison for life, or even for a term of years. Tell him further, if you desire, that she will never be convicted of a crime. The career of Zanoni is not ended yet."

"It seems to be drawing mighty near a close," s Nick.

"Oh, no, it does not."

"Perhaps you are contemplating suicide, and thi that through your candies, your celluloid brush a comb, your tea, and the other things you have procur you can manufacture a poison which will do the worl said Nick. "You see I am better posted than you s posed. I have taken pains to discover all that been done for you since you have been here, and wh you are in this consultation room with me, your is being cleaned and the things you have purchased being taken from it."

She laughed back at him.

"Poison!" she exclaimed. "I would only use that a last resort, and be assured that I can find a way to it if I need it. I believe I said just now that the car of Zanoni was not ended yet. It has only just begu

She stepped forward, close to the detective, a laughing in his face, she said:

"I will make you a promise, Nick Carter. Witi a week from this day I will stand before you, in yc own house, free; and I will laugh at you then a do now."

CHAPTER III.

ON THE TRAIL OF DR. QUARTZ.

Nick Carter crossed over from the Tombs, in Cen Street, to the central office of the police in Mulbe Street.

"Inspector," he said, when he was closeted with chief of the detective bureau, "I have never, until day, wished to be a warden of a prison."

"What are you getting at, Nick?" asked the spector.

"An undeniable fact. I would like to be the war of the Tombs for the next few weeks."

"Why?"

"Because I would like personally to make sure Zanoni will not escape."

"Nobody has ever escaped from the Tombs Nick."

"By Jove, I am inclined to think that she will find way to do it."

"But how? How is it possible?"

"If I knew, I'd post the warden so he could prent it."

"The thing isn't possible, old man."

"I'll grant that it does not seem possible; but don't rget that you have never had a Zanoni there be-re, either."

"If she can get out of the Tombs, she will deserve r liberty."

"If she gets out of the Tombs, it will be accomplished fooling some of the people there in some manner. have tried my best to warn them all, to-day, but they ly laugh at the warnings."

"Naturally."

"They had been buying candy and a lot of other ngs for her; and they will buy more, as soon as back is turned. I wish I had authority there for week or so."

"You will have to go to the sheriff, or the mayor for t, Nick. What would you do if you had it?"

"I'd prevent Zanoni from getting away."

"Do you really have an idea that she can accomsh it?"

"I don't know what she'll do. She is mighty conent that she will get out."

"All bluff, Nick."

"Maybe so. She promised to call upon me at my use within a week. Look here, inspector, aren't ere some extra safeguards which we can place around r there?"

"I don't know of another one. The thing is out our hands now, anyhow. What is the use of woring about it. If she escapes, we are not to blame, d we will only have her to catch over again. I supse we might as well be doing that as anything else; ar?"

"Yes; if she doesn't leave another trail of murders hind her."

"In the meantime, Nick, are you still bothered about at question of whether Quartz is alive or dead?"

"I confess that I am. The trouble is, George, that I was so dazed when I was in that room that night where I believed I saw him, that now the whole thing has faded out of my recollection in such a way that I am not sure of anything that occurred that night, save the struggle with Zanoni. I think I'll take a run out to Kansas City, and go over the old ground myself. I sent Chick there, and he is as good as I am; only it is not like going into a thing for yourself."

"Not quite. That is so."

"I'll be back in a few days. If you should want me in the meantime, wire to the Coates House."

"All right."

Thirty-six hours later the detective was in Kansas City, and he lost no time in finding the warden of the prison where Quartz was hanged.

"I want all the particulars about that hanging," he said to him.

"Why, there aren't any, Mr. Carter, any more than there are in any other case, except for the cyclone part of it."

"Tell me about that, as you view it."

"The body was placed in a tool house which stood in the yard, under the prison wall."

"Yes; I know that."

"The night was a bitter cold one. The thermometer registered twelve degrees below zero when I got home that night."

"I know that, too."

"Well, some time in the night—the weather bureau can give you the exact time—some kind of a storm descended upon the city. It must have been a cracka-jack, although we could never find that it did any particular damage only here. Come out in the yard with me."

They went into the yard and stood upon the site of the old tool house.

"Do you see that new section of wall?" asked the warden.

"Yes."

"Well, the storm cut that out as clean as you could have cut it with a knife if it had been made of butter or cheese, and there weren't enough stones and mortar left of it, to have filled a good-sized hogshead,

either. It damaged the opposite wall some, also, and it tore a house to pieces which stood on the opposite side of the street."

"Humph!" said Nick.

"That is all I know about it," continued the warden, "except that in the morning the tool house, and all it had contained, had disappeared. You know the rest of the story, of course."

"Yes. I suppose you are pretty well satisfied that Quartz was dead."

"I never saw a 'deader' man."

"One of my assistants once brought a piece of canvas to you which he discovered down the Missouri River toward Jefferson City. You could not identify it, I believe."

"No; I couldn't, then; but the fact is, he left the canvas here, and I looked at it again after he had gone. I will say now that I think it really was the same canvas. In fact, I am positive about it now."

"How is that?"

"Well, there was a mark on it which I had forgotten, and which I did not discover at the time your assistant brought it here. But I was looking it over a week or two later, and I came to the conclusion that it was the same."

"There is no mistake this time, is there?"

"No, sir, there is not."

"Thank you. That will do for the present."

Nick's next call was at the office of the weather bureau.

"I want to get some particulars about the storm of the night of December twenty-fourth," he told the man in charge of it, when he entered.

"Last December?"

"Certainly."

"What do you wish to know about it?"

"First, I would like to know if you have made a map of it, and if you have done so, if you will permit me to study that map."

"Yes; I can do that, although the map is not official."

"Why not?"

"It has never been registered. I made the map myself, and it was naturally done largely from conjecture. In fact, it pictures merely my own impressions of the direction taken by the storm; where it came from, and where it went to after it left here."

"That is precisely what I want to know," said Nick.

"I made it for my own pleasure, you know, and could not ask the government to accept it as authentic. It is mostly guesswork, you know."

"But the guesswork, as you call it, is the result of your own experience and study, is it not?"

"Certainly."

"You, yourself, really believe the map to be true, do you not?"

"Why—yes—I do."

The weather man was searching through an open portfolio while he was talking, and he now produced the map in question.

"Here it is," he said. "I will ask you not to mention the fact that I have shown you such a map."

"Certainly not. Now, before I examine it, let me ask you a question or two about the storm itself."

"With pleasure."

"What sort of a storm was it?"

"That is a difficult question to answer. An ordinary person—that is the average man on the street—would describe it as a cyclone, but it was not that. Neither was it a hurricane. In fact, it could not be classed by the use of any ordinary term, and a new name would have to be found for it."

"Then in reality it was a phenomenon."

"It certainly was."

"Tell me your idea of it."

"Such a storm as that could be produced only by a wave of heat entering a zone of intense cold. I will suppose, for example—and, mind, I do not say that this is the fact, but that we will suppose—that some immense meteor passed over the city that night. The storm of snow would have prevented the meteor from being seen, but the great heat from it would have been there, just the same."

"Yes."

"Such a thing might have caused the phenomenon. The tail of a comet, sweeping within a million miles

...earth might have caused it, too," and the weather ...n smiled, and added: "but, of course, such a theory ...not tenable."

"Hardly. If such a thing had happened, the storm ...ould have had a much wider area."

"Indeed, it would. So wide that it would have ...ept up the entire city, and, perhaps, all the cities ...d towns of the State, instead of a bit of wall and an ...ignificant tool house."

"Well, let's get back to the meteor."

"Very good. If there had been such a thing, it ...ght have produced exactly the same result. That ... it would have sent a flash of heat cutting through a ...e of intense cold, and the contact of the two would ...e created a central disturbance of Titanic propor... performing, no doubt, exactly what this storm ... That is, it would have torn away and lifted up ...atever it happened to strike, and it would have ...ried it away on an ever widening circle until it lost ... force, which was its power of suspension, and ...ped whatever it carried. Do you follow me? Do ... understand me?"

"Perfectly. You mean that the point of heat, when ...descended into the zone of cold, was started to ...tling by the coming together, or the crashing to... of the walls of cold on either side of it."

"Exactly. And that the pressure of those walls of ...d as you are pleased to call them, increased a thou...adfold with every second, so that the whirlwind— ...we may call it that for want of a better term— ...reased in violence with incredible and inconceivable ...iftness."

"I understand you."

"So that, although the heated zone might have been ...ist soft as a zephyr when it touched the top of the ...wn wall and the house opposite it, and yet in a ...r fraction of time, compelled by the rushing together of ...h walls of cold which had been separated, it might ...ve attained sufficient power to have lifted the city ...ll and carried it away in the clouds, dropping it ...nearth again only when the cold had conquered and ...bsorbed the last out of existence."

"Then the power itself was really a lifting power, and not a driving one, like an ordinary wind?"

"Precisely. The nearer the earth you get, the denser the air, and hence the greater pressure from those walls of cold; and hence, again, a lifting power. But it, itself, might have been driven in any direction by the wind, just as a balloon would have been controlled by it."

"I see. That miniature cyclone, whirlwind, whatever you call it, whirling in itself with almost immeasurable power, was yet compressed into a thing by itself by the frozen air around it, and forced to ascend by the heavier air under it, while at the same time it was driven——"

"In an ever widening circle—don't forget that—until the cold conquered the heat, and the disturbance was therefore at an end."

"So the mere fact that one article dropped by the storm was found west of the city, would not render it impossible that another article, dropped in like manner, should be discovered east of the city. That is what I wished to know, and now, if you please, I'll examine this map."

CHAPTER IV.

THE SKELETON IN THE HUT.

The map was a document which it is impossible to describe, since it was nothing more than a series of circular lines drawn in an ever widening circle with a fine pen.

It showed, however, that the circles covered almost the entire State, and it demonstrated to Nick Carter, the moment he looked at it, that if the map were even approximately true, there could be nothing astonishing in the fact that Chick had picked up a piece of canvas with which the body of Dr. Quartz was covered, halfway to Jefferson City, to the east, while the tool house in which the cot had been placed, was found to the west of the city.

He studied the map with great care for more than an hour, making occasional notes from it and then he gave it back to the weather man.

"I thank you very much," he said. "I think you have supplied me with just about what I most wanted."

Then he took his departure, and he hurried directly to the railroad station from whence he took an east-bound train.

Late that afternoon he found the man who had rescued the canvas and from whom Chick had procured it.

"Do you remember that piece of canvas which——" he began; but the man interrupted him.

"Sure I remember it," he said. "I wish I had another to sell to you at the same price I got for that one. The chap who bought it, gave me two dollars for it, and it wasn't worth a penny of anybody's money."

"Good," said Nick. "All the same, perhaps you have got something that is quite as valuable to sell."

"What, for instance?" asked the man.

"Do you happen to own a boat, on the river?"

"I've got an old flat-bottomed scow. You don't want to buy that, do you?"

"No; but I may wish to hire it for a day or so after you have replied to a few questions I wish to ask."

"Fire away, boss."

"Where did you find that canvas?"

"Down by the river bank."

"How long?"

"About three or four miles below here."

"Do you think it had floated there, or had it caught there somehow?"

"It couldn't have floated there very well, because it was high up on the bank, thirty rods or more from the water. In fact, it was in the top of a small tree. That is how I happened to see it."

"When did you find it?"

"Oh, along about the first of May, or a little before that."

"Did it appear as have been a long time in that tree?"

"I couldn't say about that. It might have been there all winter, for all I know."

"You had not been in that direction before, this last spring, had you?"

"No."

"Did you find anything else around there near the canvas?"

"Anything else—what? What do you mean?"

"Well, for example, didn't you find something which looked very much like a bed cot not far from where you found the canvas? Because, if you did, I would like to know about it. Not that I want the cot, I do not. You may keep it, and a five-dollar bill for it, if you found that, and can show it to me."

"Well, then, I did find it, but I can't show it to you, because I ain't got it. But I can show you the springs that were part of the cot. I've got them."

"What became of the cot itself?"

"It was smashed all to smithereens. It wasn't good at all. But the springs, which were screwed to it, were right good, and I saved them. I didn't see anything about them when the other feller was a-thinking he might want to claim 'em."

"Very good. Now, I promised you five dollars if you would show me the cot, but, instead of that, I'll make it ten if you will take me to the place where you found it."

"Come ahead. I can't make ten dollars no easier than that, nohow."

They were soon at the river and in the old flat-bottomed boat, drifting down with the muddy current, and after about three and one-half miles had been covered, the boatman rowed the craft ashore and pointed at a stubby tree which grew on the bank.

"The canvas was in that tree, boss," he said. "And the cot was about half a mile further down the river, close to the water. Now, if that information is worth to you, you are welcome to it."

"Thank you, my man. Now, what is that old cot worth to you if you should never see it again?"

"Maybe ten dollars."

"All right. Here are twenty dollars. If I do not return the boat to you, you can claim it when you find it along the river between here and Jaffa City. By the way, how far are we from there?"

"A matter of sixty miles as the river runs."

"You can walk home, I suppose."

"Sure thing."

"After to-morrow you may look for your boat. If s not drawn up on the bank between here and Jeffer- City, it will be there, somewhere."

The detective stepped into the boat, and keeping lose to the shore, permitted it to drift down with current, while at the same time he studied care- ly every inch of the river bank as he passed it, al- ough he did not give it that particular attention ore he arrived at about the point where the man discovered the cot, that he devoted to it immedi- ly afterward.

"According to that map," he mused, "the storm cir- traveled along directly over the river, for almost e miles, right along here. The canvas was the first g torn away from its fastenings, doubtless, and, fore, it flew out of the grasp of the storm up e, where that fellow found it.

"After that, with the canvas no longer there to d the body in its place on the cot, the two must e separated—that is, the body of the man, and the . Now, which would be likely to drop to the earth ? Why, the cot, of course, since it was not a solid stance and would not, therefore, be supported in air as readily as the body. Ergo, I must look for place where the body fell, further down the river. go down to what I think is about the place; then run ashore and study the bank of the river in both ections, on foot."

Something less than an hour later he landed his boat sprang out of it, for a deep ravine in the bank the river had suggested to him a likely place to land d to leave the boat while he searched, since the shore s more inviting just there than in any other place had passed.

When he pulled the boat upon the beach—if beach it ght be called—and started toward the more solid d nearer where trees were growing, he noticed at had once been quite a well-worn pathway, leading o the ravine. Now, however, it was littered with ss, and there were bunches of weeds growing di- ly in the center of it in many places.

"This has been a path which was used almost ily," he mused, "and not so very long ago, either; several months, perhaps. I'll follow it a little way to see where it leads."

The path led him gradually upon higher ground and into the depths of the ravine, and at last it turned aside, passed around a huge bowlder which seemed greatly out of place in that locality, for bowlders do not abound along the Missouri, and came out in a little glade which contained perhaps a hundred square feet.

Across that glade on the opposite side of it, resting against the steep side of the ravine, and apparently unoccupied, was a hut, made of slabs and refuse from the river.

"Now, if I could only find the chap who once lived here," mused the detective, "he might possess valuable information for me. It is evident that nobody lives here now, and that nobody has done so for some time past; all the same, I would like to find the man who did occupy this residence.

He strode across the glade and tried the door.

It opened easily when he raised the latch, and he was on the point of entering when he started back suddenly.

The skeleton of a human being was stretched across the hearth in front of the broken half of a stove which had once been used as a fireplace.

CHAPTER V.

A MESSAGE FROM THE DEAD.

Nick Carter hesitated only an instant. Then he passed inside and stood over the heap of bones which had once been a man.

The skull grinned up at him from a pile of ashes inside the impromptu fireplace where the flames had blackened and partly consumed it, and he bent nearer to view it more closely.

"Ha!" he said. "There has been murder done here. There is a bullet hole through that skull, directly in the middle of the forehead. It was a big bullet, too, I should imagine, to judge from the size of the hole it made.

"So; I won't be able to find the man who once lived

here, for that man is dead, and somebody has thought it necessary to put him out of the way.

"The body has laid a long time, too, and what nature has not done to purify it, muskrats and other animals along the river have attended to."

There were strips of clothing and bits of a pair of old shoes near the bones, and these the detective kicked aside in disgust.

"Well, old chap," he said, presently, "I'm sorry for you; and perhaps if you cannot tell me anything I wish to know, your belongings might do so. At all events, since there seems to have been no heir to claim your effects, I will take possession of them for the time being."

There was a rude couch in one corner of the hut, which had once been covered with old blankets and skins, but these, like the remains of the clothing of the dead man, had been gnawed into unrecognition by the rodents.

Nevertheless, Nick tore the couch to pieces, scattering the pieces of it here and there, but with a system, his only idea being to place each one of them so out of his way that he might not be forced to examine it a second time.

But the couch contained nothing which had a story to tell, and he turned his attention to other parts of the place.

Over against the fireplace, at one end of it, were several empty whisky flasks, and one which was only half emptied.

Nick smelled of it to be assured that it was whisky, and then cast it from him, as he had done the other things.

In the middle of the floor of the hut was a rude table, evidently manufactured by the man who had built the cabin, and out of the same character of material. Nevertheless, it was a table which had doubtless served its owner's purposes very well; and at either side of it, facing the fireplace, were seats.

One of these was a chair with a back to it; the other was a stool, and on the floor, directly in front of the stool, was a wide stain which had doubtless once been blood.

"Hello!" said Nick. "Here, at least, is a part of the story. There is a spot or two of blood on the floor on this side, too. That poor, old bunch of bones was sitting on this stool when he was killed, and the person who killed him was seated in the chair on the other side, without any sort of doubt. Ah! And here is the gun which did the business."

A big Colt 45, covered with rust, was on the floor under the table, and he picked it up and examined it.

"Sure," he said. "This is the gun. Only one bullet fired out of it, and four more there which might have been used as well as not. Still, that one did the business. There was no need for any others."

The afternoon was waning.

Down in the depths of that ravine where Nick had discovered the hut, the sun had long since ceased to shine, if indeed it ever shone there at all; and the darkness inside the hut had become so pronounced that Nick Carter paused in his investigation and stepped outside for a breath of fresh air.

"Here is a small side tragedy, of which the world has never heard, and of which it may never hear," he mused to himself, as he looked down the ravine toward the bowlder beyond which was the river. "It is not an all an inviting place in which to spend the night; but it is the best I can find for the present, I suppose, and I may as well make the most of it. I can shovel the bones outside till morning, when I will do the decent chap the decency to bury them, and I can build a fire in that old half a stove and amuse myself with trying to read the story that is written there. To-morrow bright and early, after I have buried this poor fellow's remains, I will get to work on my own matter."

His first care, while there remained sufficient light was to gather a good supply of dry wood for his fire, for he desired it more for the sake of the light it would afford, than for the warmth it would give, although it was already damp and chilly in the ravine.

Next he moved the bones outside, with an old and dilapidated shovel he found there.

The cabin was also provided with a camera and a lamp, and each one of these necessities would be enough to fix for the night, as he had found in the chest

the globe, polishing them with paper taken from ... rockets, and at last the house was prepared for him. "... might be quite comfortable," he mused, "if only he ...d something to eat; but my stomach will have to ... upon necessity, I reckon."

... the meantime, during these preparations, darkness settled and night was upon him, and so, without ...e ado, he lighted his fire and the lamps and lan... and began what he had referred to as his "amuse... hour."

... his only idea was to occupy his time in deciphering, ... far as possible, the mystery of the cabin, and of the ...der which had been committed there. The task ...ld occupy his mind, and it would change his cur... of thought so that he would be all the better able ...cope with his own problem on the morrow.

... he brought one of the lamps—the best one—and ...ed it on the table. The other, as well as the lan..., he placed at convenient places about the cabin ... that their light would cover as completely as pos... the territory he wished to examine.

... moving the bones from the cabin, he had somehow ...overed the skull, or it had escaped him in the dark... ; and now, as he looked toward the blazing fire ... the hearth, he saw it at one side of the fireplace, ...ming up at him, with the suggestive hole in its ...head, and with its sightless eyes and upper teeth ...inly in evidence.

... dropped upon the stool where the man had ...riously been seated when the fatal bullet was fired ...o his brain, and he sat there for a long time, con...plating that grinning jaw and those sightless eyes.

There seemed to be some sort of fascination about ... whole thing, which he could not, or did not try to ...hom; and he smiled back at the thing.

"You're a companionable sort of a chap, anyhow," ... said to the skull. "I meant to put you outside, and ... wouldn't go. You left the best part of you, your ...ul, in here with me, and you look up at me with ... sightless eyes, for all the world as if you would ...e to tell me something, and are dreadfully sorry ...n't can't."

He moved his arm a little, and it came in contact with the lamp, so that he almost overturned it; and then, as he took hold of the stem of the lamp to move it further away, his eyes fell upon some marks that were scratched upon the table beside it.

He merely glanced at them at first, noticing, as he did so, that they had been made by the finger nail or the thumb nail of some person who had been seated there, where he was.

They were very faint, and the shadow of the lamp itself concealed them from the light given out by the flame.

"Now, there is something," he mused, "which might have a story to tell," and he turned his eyes back again to the skull. When he continued, he spoke aloud, addressing the skull.

"You, poor chap, were doubtless sitting right where I am when you were shot. You were talking with the man on the other side of the table—the man who shot you. Eh? Is that right?

"You cannot answer, so we will let that pass. One thing is certain, you were not expecting to be shot, or you wouldn't have been seated here doing nothing, while the other fellow was getting ready to shoot you. You would have been busy. That forehead of yours looks as if there was once considerable brain behind it—and will power, too.

"You were probably talking with that man on the other side of the table, and while you were talking you were just a trifle nervous or uneasy, or something. Anyhow, you didn't have your gun in your hand to play with. By the way! I think I'll have another look at that gun."

He had placed it on a chair after he lifted it from the floor, and now he secured it and held it close to the lighted lamp.

It had a smooth, hardwood stock, and this was scratched and worn with years of constant use; nevertheless, there were distinct scratches upon it.

"J. H.," Nick managed to decipher from among the hieroglyphics, at last. "So: that was your name, was it? J. H.? Or was it the name of the other fellow, and was this his gun instead of yours?

"No, not by a long shot! He carried his own gun

away with him, if he had one. He would not have left it here, especially with his initials on the handle; and, besides, it is more than likely that he had none, and that he had to entice yours away from you in some manner, in order to use it on you.

"Yes, this was your gun, J. H., and you were fond of scratching your initials upon it, and upon other things as well, weren't you? I can see a dozen places here where you have scratched them in from time to time, sometimes with the point of your knife blade, and sometimes with your thumb nail, just as you scratched upon the table. As fast as the initials wore down so that you could not see them, you scratched new ones, didn't you?

"You were really great at that trick, weren't you, old chap? It amused you. You liked a great deal alone, I take it, and little things amused you which at another time in your life you might not have cared about.

"Now, that chap sitting opposite you at this table—who was he? The man who shot you, I mean: who was he? You can't answer, can you, and I will have to do it for you? And now let us see if it can be done.

"You weren't used to company, that is certain: and you didn't much like company, that is equally certain, else you would not have lived in this God-forsaken spot, and hidden your old cabin away out of the sight of everybody. And you liked to scratch initials, too.

"Well, you scratched something on this table while you were sitting here with your guest. I haven't looked at it yet, but I mean to do so in a moment. Now, what is more likely than that you should have scratched his initials, or even his name: eh? Eh? By Jove, old chap, if you did that, and I can find the man without too much trouble, I'll avenge you. I will."

Nick turned from the contemplation of the skull, then, and moving the lamp so that the light would fall upon the letters scratched upon the table, he read them aloud slowly, one by one.

And the letters he read were:

"QUARTZ."

CHAPTER VI.

THE TESTIMONY OF A HUMAN SKULL.

For a moment after making this astounding discovery, Nick Carter remained absolutely silent and motionless, with his eyes dwelling upon the letters on the table.

The sense of them was so utterly unanticipated; the revelation contained in them was so unexpected, so unlooked for, and the mystery of them was so appalling.

The detective would have experienced no greater surprise if Dr. Quartz in person had stepped in at the door of the old cabin and addressed him.

The letters on the table told him so much and so little. They were so filled with revelation, and so void of it, that the apparent meaning of them stunned him; for if they meant anything at all, they meant that Dr. Quartz had been seated on the other side of the table, and had talked with the man whose skull was at that moment grinning up at the detective from beside the fireplace.

After a little Nick moved. Then he straightened up, folded his arms, and fixed his eyes on the eyeless sockets of the skull.

"I wish you could talk! I wish you could talk!" he said, twice.

Then he stared through the bullet hole in the skull until it blurred under his gaze; and presently he rose from the chair, shook himself as a dog does when he comes out of the water, and turning, he walked out of the cabin into the starlit night.

In all his wide experience he had never experienced a shock which affected him as this incident had done; and while he stood there under the stars with folded arms, blinking at the night, he went back in his memory over the ground he had covered since his arrival in Kansas City.

But more particularly he dwelt upon the conversation he had had with the weather man; his study of the map; the weather man's dissertation upon the phenomena of the storm.

After a while he returned to the cabin and to

...l beside the table, seating himself upon it again, ...and again peering into the eyeless sockets of the skull, ...and addressing it when he spoke.

"You sat here, where I am sitting, J. H., and Quartz ...at there; and Quartz shot you. That much is settled. He shot you with your own gun, too, for it is a mighty ...are thing that he didn't bring one with him when he came here on the wings of the wind. That cyclone did a lot for him, I'll admit, but it's a cinch that it did not supply him with a gun. Just Heaven, how I wish you could talk! But you can't, so I've got to get along without you somehow."

He turned to the table, then, and moved the lamp first one way and then another, studying the surface of the old table with great care.

There was a multitude of scratches upon it, but nearly all of them were very old, as if they had been made from time to time while the owner of the cabin sat there alone; and the detective noticed another significant thing, also, which was that nearly all the old scratches had been made from the opposite side of the table, which demonstrated that J. H. was in the habit of sitting in the chair where his guest had been seated, when he was alone.

But, nevertheless, there were other scratches beside the six significant letters, which faced his way.

They were quite faint, to be sure, and there were many of them, but after a long time spent in careful study, he managed to decipher them.

This time they were figures, not letters; and they were as follows, occupying the same relative positions to each other in which they are printed here:

50000
$$$$$$$
50000
$$$
1000008

"It's a sure thing that they were talking about dollars, and that the amount of fifty and a hundred thousand dollars were mentioned in that talk," mused Nick. Then he scratches fifty thousand on the table, and then he makes a lot of dollar signs. Then he tries fifty thousand again, and more dollar signs. Then he scratches a hundred thousand with a few dollar signs after it, and stops.

"I suppose about the size of the whole thing is that J. H. managed somehow to rescue the doctor that night. Probably he found him on the river bank somewhere, where he had been dropped by the storm, brought him in here, attended to him, took care of him, nursed him back to health and strength, and—and that bullet hole is the method by which the grateful doctor eventually repaid him. Yes; that is about the size of it—and it is exactly what Quartz would be likely to do under the circumstances, too.

"What! Let a man live who knew that he was alive? Nay, nay: that would not be Quartz. That was a fatal knowledge which you possessed, old chap," he added, again addressing the skull. "You might far better have asked no questions of your uninvited guest. You might far better not have insisted upon knowing who he was, whence he came, and how he got here. Curiosity has killed a great many men since time began, and it did for you that time, sure.

"But I suppose you thought it a very strange thing that a big man like Quartz should be brought here by the wind, and deposited close at hand for you to succor.

"Like enough you saw the welts of the rope that hanged him, swelling upon his neck, and thought that was a strange sort of a mark for a man to carry around with him. Maybe you asked him about them. If you did, that was another nail in your coffin—for I shall make you a coffin out of the boards of this old shanty, in the morning, and I will give your bones a decent burial if it is the last thing I ever do in this world.

"And that fifty and a hundred thousand dollar business, J. H.; I wonder what that was all about?

"Now, I shouldn't wonder, from the fact of your living alone in this old cabin, hidden away in the ravine down by the river, if you and the rest of civilization were at outs about something. Perhaps thickly inhabited localities weren't healthy for you. You lived so much alone and you were so fond of that old forty-five, that maybe you depended upon it to preserve your own liberty.

"It may be, even, that the hangman's rope was one

of the things you feared, and that the coming of Dr. Quartz, who had been in the grip of one, was what made you a little more nervous than usual.

"And that talk about the fifty and the hundred thousand. Humph!

"I suppose the doctor must have pretended to be very grateful to you for saving him; eh?

"I wouldn't a bit wonder if he just told you, in an offhand manner, that he would give you fifty or a hundred for the service, and the sum made such an impression on you that you jotted it down with your thumb nail on the table.

"Sure! That is the idea.

"You sat here talking about it all in the most natural way in the world, and the doctor, as wily as a serpent, won your confidence by taking the only road which would lead to it, in a man like you were—that is, by making a clean breast of the facts.

"Sure! He told you, as plain as day, exactly who he was. He told you that he had been hanged, and afterward brought here in some way which he did not know about, for he could have known no more about that storm than I did, who was fifteen hundred miles away at the time.

"I suppose that Quartz must have been dropped down in the top of a tree or in the river, for if he had struck the ground it would have done for him what the rope failed to do: it would have broken his neck, or some part of him.

"Then you brought him here, eh, J. H.? You filled him up with whisky, I suppose, and the doctor, being always an abstemious man, it did him good. It set the blood to running in his veins and arteries. It made a new man of him.

"But I can't understand your letting him get his claws into that gun, old chap. That was not at all like you, living alone here as you did, and probably trusting no man at all.

"Men like you were, are apt to carry their gun in their best leg, where they can reach it mighty sudden when it is wanted, and use it just as quickly. No; I cannot understand that part of it."

He rose from the stool and stood facing the fire for a moment, with his hands in his pockets, looking d at the skull.

"Quartz did not have anything about him save clothes he wore, that is certain," he mused, "but t were nice, new, black clothes, just made, for him wear when he was hanged. I don't suppose they w hurt much, by the experiences he went through, they would do to wear when he left here, all ri But he had to have money."

Nick turned his back to the fire and began to s every nook and cranny of the cabin with his searc eyes.

Suddenly he started forward, crossed the floor a to the old couch, pulled it aside, and began tear up the flooring under it.

"If J. H. had any money, he would have hidde somewhere about here," he mused, while he work and then a gleam of satisfaction came into his face. Nick was always pleased when he had guessed c rectly about something which puzzled him.

There, under the floor beneath the couch, wa hole in the ground which the defamer of that hid receptacle had not thought worth while to refill a he had rifled it of its contents. And in the hole an empty tin box with the cover torn off—the which had one time contained the cash saved by J. H. for a rainy day.

"There might have been ten dollars, and there mi have been ten thousand dollars, in that box when doctor rifled it," thought the detective. "Whate there was there, he got it, anyhow."

After that, Nick spent two hours more in a car search of the interior of the cabin; but search as might, there was nothing more revealed to him.

"I will leave it till morning," he decided, at "When daylight comes I will tear the old roof off cabin and use it to make a coffin for these poor, bones. Thus it will serve me two purposes, for it let the light of day in here, so that I'll be able to s little better what I am doing."

Then he drew the old couch nearer to the fire, pl fresh wood on the blaze, and ten minutes later he

ing as peacefully as if he had never heard of Dr. rtz and his many crimes.

e with the break of day he was astir again, and in half an hour he was tearing away the roof of d cabin, for the double purpose of making a box which to bury the bones of J. H., and to admit the t of day upon his further investigations.

Then while he was pulling the boards loose from rusty nails, another incident happened.

From a hidden receptacle under the rafters of the a small bundle, wrapped in soiled, yellow paper, to the ground when he pulled away the board ich had held it in place.

He secured it quickly, tore away the paper wrapping, disclosed an ordinary blank book, now filled to the ers with penciled writing.

"It is the diary of poor J. H.," exclaimed the detive; and he began to read what was written there.

CHAPTER VII.

ZANONI SENDS IN HER CARD.

The book discovered by Nick, under the rafters of cabin, when he tore away the boards to make a box which to bury the bones of the dead man, was not, rictly speaking, a diary.

It had not been kept up religiously, day by day, but been resorted to at odd intervals, and often these iods were separated by a month or more.

But as it was, it covered a space of five years, and was the record of a man upon whose body, dead or e, the State had set a price.

The writer of the journal was an outlaw. He conled it there. He was, indeed, an ex-member of Younger and James boys' gang of outlaws—the y surviving member who was still alive and at liby, he claimed, in the diary.

"The State offers five thousand dollars for me, dead alive," he had written at the beginning of the book. If anybody gets it, he will get it for my dead body, I shall never be taken alive; and if they take me , there will be other dead men around there, too."

It is not important here to go into detail concerning the writings of Josh Hurly, as he confessed his name to have been, for the record of his life has nothing to do with this tale, although it would have made a story of itself worth recounting.

It told of his crimes; of the robberies in which he had been concerned; of the fights he had fought; of the hairbreadth escapes he had met with; of the secrets of Bob and Cole Younger, and of Jesse James. It gave insights into the characters of those men which the world has never learned, and never will learn, unless Nick Carter should some day decide to print the contents of Josh Hurly's diary.

But the only entries which concerned the present case were at the end of the volume.

They were dated December 26th, and therefore the day after the rescue of Quartz from the river, and they were as follows:

"Dr. Quartz! I have heard of that galoot before, and if report is true, I'm an angel with wings alongside of him. Picked him up in the river night before last. He dropped out of the clouds, I reckon. He don't know where he came from any more than I do, except that he was hanged in Kansas City that night. I've heard of storms doing strange things, but I never before knew of a case where it brought a dead man to life, or saved one who was hanged.

"Quartz says he'll give me fifty or a hundred thousand dollars for saving him. I wonder where he keeps it and which he means. But I'll take the fifty and look pleasant, and not ask any questions, either, and then I'll light out of this country. Reckon I'll go to Europe, or China. Almost anywhere will do me, out of the reach of Gov. Marmaduke and his reward of five thousand dollars.

"He's a wise cuss, this Quartz, and I reckon he'll be on the square with me. He seems grateful. I never saw such eyes as he's got. I wish I knew as much as he does. It's a pleasure to sit and listen to him talk.

"I never saw anybody pick up so quick as he has done. He seems to be as well and strong as I am, already. He says that to-morrow we'll light out of this, go straight to New York, and that he'll give me

the money when we get there. After that we part company. Well, that's all right.

"I'll leave this old book in the rafters where I have always kept it. Some day somebody will find it, and then they'll know what became of Josh Hurly."

That was all.

Nick closed the book, hid it away in one of his pockets, and returned to his task of making the box for the burial of the bones. He had no further interest now in searching the cabin. It had told him all there was to tell.

The unwritten history of it all, was how Dr. Quartz had managed to possess himself of Josh Hurly's gun; for Quartz alone could explain that, and Nick decided that some day Dr. Quartz would have to do that very thing.

As the detective was taking a last look around him before leaving the place, he discovered something glittering on the floor, where it also had fallen from among the rafters, and, securing it, he found that it was an old tintype picture, and scratched on the back of it, evidently with the point of a pin, were these words:

"Walked into Jefferson City the other day and had this taken. Wouldn't the picture man collapse if he knew it was me! J. H."

So, Nick Carter possessed the picture as well as the diary of Josh Hurly, outlaw, murdered by Dr. Quartz.

* * * * * * *

It was a week to a day after his conversation with Inspector McCloskey, when Nick Carter arrived in the city of New York again.

And it was night, also; ten o'clock at night, so he took his way directly to his own home.

Nobody knew of the investigations he had made, or of the success of his trip. For reasons of his own he had decided to keep his discoveries to himself for the present, and not to carry out the idea that he believed Dr. Quartz to be quite dead—as dead as a man who had been hanged can be.

But as the detective walked toward his home from the station—it was a warm, June night, and after his long ride in the cars the exercise of walking was grateful to him—he recalled the extraordinary promise which Zanoni had made to him before his departure.

"Within a week I will call upon you at your own house," she had said—or words to that effect.

"Within a week, eh?" he mused. "Well, the week is up. I wonder if she has managed to fool the people who were watching her since I have been away. I don't know what she could do to get out of the tomb unless she resorted to that old trick of Zel's, in the days of the original Dr. Quartz—unless she somehow got hold of a drug which would produce the semblance of death, had herself carried out, and then, when the proper moment arrived, came to again, and so escaped. I never thought of the possibility of her doing that, or I would have warned them before I went away."

He turned the corner into his own street, and was rapidly approaching his own home, when suddenly there was a shock and a roar ahead of him.

At the same instant, it seemed as if the entire front of a house, not far distant—his own house, too—leaped from its foundations into the street, and fell into a heap of dust and rubbish.

A blinding blast of flame followed the explosion, so that Nick Carter, who was fully two hundred feet distant from it, was hurled to the pavement, all unprepared as he was for the catastrophe.

The houses adjoining his own, on either side of it, were also partly wrecked by the explosion. Windows all along the block were shattered, and broken glass and bits was thrown in every direction around him, where he stood, even at that distance.

The detective was no sooner down than he was up again, and, running at full speed toward the scene of the explosion; and in the meantime people had rushed into the street from other houses along each side of it, crying out in affright, and many of them actually stupefied with terror.

The front of his own house was an utter ruin.

The front steps had been torn away and broken into fragments. The walls, almost to the top floor, had belched out upon the thoroughfare.

Whoever had committed the deed, had done it thoroughly, and had taken time to escape before the

sion occurred, for there was not a sign of a person in the street before it happened, and there were none to there now save those who had run out of their houses, many in their night clothes, after the explosion took place.

"Well," mused Nick, pausing in front of his own wrecked doorway, "this is a pleasant welcome. I'm only glad that I did not happen to be standing on the steps when that mine was shot. Hello! There's Chick."

Through the cloud of dust which still hung like a pall over the scene, he could discern his chief assistant in the shattered hallway of the house. Behind him stood Albert Peyton, and just beyond them were Patsy and Ten-Ichi, and still further back, a group of frightened servants.

"Thank Heaven nobody is killed!" was Nick's first thought.

And then he acted upon his second one.

He turned away again, worked his way slowly through the crowd until he had got beyond it, and then with deft fingers and hurried actions he resorted to one of his quick changes of disguise, the material for which he always carried in his pockets.

Within five minutes' time he was back again in front of his own house, an interested spectator of what was taking place; and within those five minutes Albert Peyton had taken entire charge of everything, while Chick and the remaining two assistants had disappeared.

"Good!" said Nick to himself. "The lads are losing no time, but I much fear that they will discover nothing. It is just possible that the person who set off the mine will return to see the result of the explosion, but it is not likely, especially if it was done by the direction of Quarg or Zanoni; and of course one of them is responsible for it.

"Gee whiz! I wonder if Zanoni has escaped, after all, and if this is the call she promised to make. She sent her card in with a vengeance, if it is."

His disguise, however, was of no avail; neither were the efforts of his assistants to discover anybody or anything responsible for the explosion.

An hour later, Nick Carter was in his study at the back of the house on the second floor.

The disturbed furniture had been put to rights; the pictures had been returned to the walls; the room itself, while it looked as if something had happened, was almost restored to its original repose.

Down at the front of the house, Patsy and Ten-Ichi were on guard. Peter, Nick's valet, had been dispatched to Contractor McGonnigal, with instructions for him to set a force of men at work early in the morning to restore it without delay.

Albert Peyton and Chick were in the study with the detective.

"So," Nick was saying, "Zanoni fooled them, after all, did she? Now that we are quiet once more, suppose you tell me all about it, Chick."

"The 'all about it,'" replied Chick, "consists in the fact that she was taken violently ill. The doctor was sent for. She went into convulsions, and one followed another so rapidly that she was ordered to the hospital at once, and the physician did not believe she would survive till she reached there."

"And then——?"

"She remained in the prison ward of the hospital just three days and nights; but the next morning after that they found the night nurse in Zanoni's bed, dead, and Zanoni had disappeared. And the strange part of it is that the dead nurse had not a mark upon her, and the autopsy failed to reveal the presence of poison, so the decision was that Zanoni had killed her with some kind of smelling salts. There was the suggestion of corrosion in her lungs to uphold that theory. That is all I know."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE WOMAN-WIZARD'S HATE.

The following morning brought a letter through the post for Nick Carter.

The letter speaks for itself, and was as follows:

"FIFTH AVENUE HOTEL, June the fourth.

"DEAR MR. DETECTIVE CARTER: Did you receive my card? I sent it in. I was dreadfully sorry, too, that you weren't at home to receive me—or, rather, to receive the card. If you had received that in the way I would like to have had you do, you would not now be reading this letter, would you?

"You see, I have discovered that you arrived—shall I say in the Nick of time?—to witness the pyrotechnic display I had arranged for you. It's a pity, Nicholas, that you weren't just a trifle earlier. It is a pity, too, that I did not at the time happen to know that you were away from home. I supposed, of course, that you were there—you and that respected brother-in-law of mine.

"I suppose you are wondering how I managed to get out of the clutches of the people at the tombs; eh? Well, I have no objection to telling you all about it; not the slightest. I assure you.

"You see, I have been for such a long time a pupil of the late lamented Dr. Quartz, that I have learned many things about the manufacture of drugs, and I am never upon going anywhere of the kind for the purpose of poisoning somebody in order that I might put me, when one day you called upon me.

"Do you remember that while we were talking together in the consultation room of the prison that the great criminal lawyer, Richard Hartleigh, passed the door? Do you also remember that he was not alone? I don't suppose you paid much attention to the gentleman who accompanied him; perhaps you did not see him at all, and it is just as well if you did not, for that gentleman came there for the express purpose of seeing me, and of giving into my hands a little package, no larger than a kernel of corn. But, oh, so potent!

"And he succeeded in giving it to me.

"The fact that you had called me down to the consultation room saved him the trouble of resorting to subterfuge—which might have been refused—in order to get into my part of the prison and to the door of my cell. He had only just entered the prison, and was on his way to the galleries to search for a supposed son who had gone astray and whom he had heard was there, when he saw me.

"You see, Mr. Detective, this gentleman was without in his generation. He invented that supposed son, and then he called upon the great criminal lawyer, and gave him a large fee in advance in order to secure his services and his personal conduct through the prison.

"With such a man as Richard Hartleigh at his side there was little doubt that he would be accorded every privilege of the tombs for the asking; and there was little likelihood that he would be subjected to very close observation.

"He was a very old gentleman, this friend of mine who brought me the little package; so old that he tottered as he walked, and so dim of sight that he had to get exceedingly close to persons and things in order to see them. That is doubtless why he stepped so close to the door of the consultation room as he was passing, and why he had to lean for the briefest fraction of time against the bars. In fact, he almost fell against the bars as he was passing.

"Cleverly done, wasn't it?

"And now, do you wish to know who that very old gentleman was?

"No doubt! No doubt!"

"Well, I will tell you. It was the Jack upon which I called when you arrested me. It was the ghost of Dr. Quartz—for it could not have been Dr. Quartz himself, could it?

"Dr. Quartz is dead, eh, Nicholas? You have always claimed that he was morally dead. Now, the police claims that he is legally dead, and, of course, therefore, he is physically dead also.

"Nevertheless, Nicholas, he is alive. You won't believe me, I know. If I thought you would, perhaps I might not be so ready to make the statement; so I will say as I said that day in the consultation room: 'He is dead. He is alive. Take your choice. Believe either statement which suits your purposes best.

"But I did not write this letter to tell you about Dr. Quartz, but about my escape—and also a few other things, as you will discover before I have finished.

"That little package I spoke of contained a powder, and that powder, after I had swallowed it, threw me into convulsions—fits—you can call them what you please.

"And, of course, the doctors who attended me leaped at once to the conclusion that I had somehow managed to possess myself of poison, which I had taken for the purposes of suicide, and therefore they applied the stomach pump to me.

"It wasn't pleasant, Nicholas, and it was risky, because if they had not used the pump, I would not now be here to write to you; but they did use it, and I am here—very much here, as you will know later.

"But I had to take the chances, and I took them—luckily, eh?

"And when they had taken me to the hospital, there was that very old gentleman again, going the rounds with the doctors, himself a great physician from Australia, or at least so the doctors of the hospital were led to believe. It is the same thing, is it not?

"He had been going the rounds with the doctors for almost a week before I was taken to the hospital, in order that they might learn to know him, in order that he might find the way about without being led, and in order that he might go and come as he pleased, and without question from the nurses or the doctors.

"Clever, was it not? Eh, Nicholas?

"Just think! When I was taken to the hospital, that very old friend of mine had already become a recognized character there, and a privileged character, too, who had already demonstrated to his colleagues that he was a man of wonderful knowledge.

"That sounds like Quartz, doesn't it?

"Well, the rest was easy. You will, yourself, admit that much.

"He had only to return in the night, when I was sufficiently recovered to carry out the original purposes of the scheme; and he had only to poison the nurse by asking her to smell of a new and delightful perfume he had found. Oh, it was done very easily.

"The nurse just slipped back into his arms as if nothing had happened, and as if she were a trifle faint, and then, while he supported her, I leaped out of bed, placed her cap on my own head, tore her hospital uniform off her as quickly as possible, and donned it over my nightdress. To be sure, her shoes were a little large, when I got to them, but they served the purpose very well indeed; and then we placed the nurse in the bed in my place, and—well, we decided to leave the hospital very soon after that.

"So, you see how easily it was all done, do you not? Just like living on a farm, eh? Or like taking candy from a child. Quite easy!

"And afterward? Well, afterward—it is different. I don't think I will be quite as explicit with the afterward; would you?

"But there is an afterward, Nicholas, and that is what I have written this letter to talk about, only I could not refrain from telling you about the escape; it was all accomplished so nicely and without a break.

"Do you remember, Mr. Detective-that-beats-the-world, that once upon a time you had the effrontery,

in that same consultation room of which mention has already been made, to suggest that I was making love to you?

"I did not suppose, Nick Carter, that you had the power to anger me, but I came mighty near to flying in your face and tearing at your eyes at that moment.

"Make love to you! Ye gods!

"Make love to you, forsooth!

"I will tell you frankly that I am a creature to love and to be loved! That I have played with the human passions in so many forms, from murder to love making, that I know the utmost heights and depths of love, as you will never, can never, know them.

"But make love to you? Well, I guess nit, if you will pardon rather a coarse expression.

"But hate you? Ah, yes, I can do that. Somebody has said that the two emotions are akin, but somebody lied; or if they are akin, this is the exception which proves the rule.

"But I do hate you, Nicholas! Yes, I do, and I would rather gratify and satisfy that hate than to accomplish anything else in all the world. I would rather look on and smile at your suffering, than to win eternal happiness. I would give up eternal happiness, if it were within my grasp, for the pleasures of visiting my hate upon you.

"I shall not be fool enough here, as others have been before me, no doubt, to tell you what I intend to do in the carrying out of that hate I bear you. I shall not forearm you, and therefore forearm you, by giving you notice of my designs. Oh, no, indeed!

"I will tell you, however, that the blowing out of the front of your house with nitroglycerin placed under the doorstep and stocked into an explosion through an insulated wire carried to the far corner from it, and afterward withdrawn, was only the report of the gun which sent the race. It was merely the announcement that the fête had begun. Only the 'Go!' of the occasion.

"You will appreciate that, perhaps. You will look at the wreck of your residence this morning after you have read this rather long letter to the end, and you will wonder what will happen next.

"Very good. Keep on wondering. Keep on guessing; you won't guess right in any case, for you are neither be forewarned nor forearmed. I have already told you that.

"Do not suppose, Nicholas, that because this letter is written from such a famous hostelry as the Fifth Avenue, that I am staying here—or even at the Murray Hill, for I am not. But the parlors are cool, and it is a warm morning. The shade here is inviting. The pens are excellent, the paper good, and it is a convenient place for me to write. I use it often. Perhaps some day, if you should sit here long enough, you might see me enter.

"Pray, tell my brother-in-law, your friend, Allan Peyton, to beware. Now that I am in the mood for dealing in warnings, I may as well inform him that he is not forgotten; he might, otherwise, take offense. Please reassure him.

"Along with your case, I will attend to his. And with yours and his, I will attend to a few others as well, notably those of Chickering Carter, of Pan, of Ten-Ichi, and, lastly, of a certain beautiful young woman who lives across the street from you, and who I am told you are to make your wife. Her name, I am told, is Carmen de Costa. You see, I am well informed.

"That is all, Nicholas. I am through. You asked me if I intended to make love to you, and I have told you how I hate you, so now, perhaps, you understand.

"ZANONI GALENA."

CHAPTER IX.

NICK CARTER'S ULTIMATUM.

"Dr. Quartz is alive!"

It was Nick Carter who spoke, and the words were

...ed to himself while he stood before his mirror ...justing his tie.

"If I find Quartz, I find Zanoni; if I find Zanoni, I ... Quartz, for it is a sure thing that they will not be ...apart."

He placed the scarf pin in his tie and seated himself ...his desk.

"Dr. Quartz is alive and in this city. Zanoni is also ...this city. I have often boasted to myself, even ...ugh I have not made the assertion to others, that a ...minal could not hide himself in this city where I ...ld not find him. It strikes me now that it is up to ...o prove it," and he got up, crossed the floor to the ...low, and stood there with his hands deep in his ...kets.

"Chick!" he called, a moment later, and after a short ... the door opened and Chick entered the room. ...had been made acquainted with all that Nick had ...mplished during his researches along the Missouri ...er, and therefore knew, as well as Nick himself, ...the dreaded doctor was still alive.

"Chick," said the detective, "this waiting will do no ...d. We must find Quartz."

Chick nodded his head, but made no reply.

"We must find him," repeated the detective; "but ...ere?"

"Where, oh, where?" said Chick, smiling.

"Exactly. Where, oh, where? I wish I knew where ... for him. If he would only conduct himself like ... other respectable thief and murderer, a fellow ...ould know how to take him and where to look for ... but he is so confoundedly original in his methods ...one cannot resort to any sort of precedent in his ... Look here, Chick."

"Well?"

"If I weren't here, and was not expected to arrive ... in other words, if you were utterly alone in this ... where would you look for him?"

"I think I should search in some eminently respectable locality, for he is probably doing the respectable act just now; and if he is, you can bet he is doing it thoroughly."

"There are a lot of respectable localities in and around this city, Chick."

"I know it."

"Well, in what sort of a respectable locality would you search first?"

"I think I'd get out in the suburbs."

"Eh? Whereabouts?"

"Well, over in the Oranges wouldn't be a bad try."

"I don't think that is entirely a bad suggestion. Tell me how you would make the search."

"I think I would begin by making a round of the real-estate offices."

"I see. Go on."

"I'd visit every one of them, beginning at one end of one section of the Oranges, and I'd get from them a list of every new tenant in his section, who had appeared there within the last two or three months. Then I'd make a systematic inquiry about those tenants, until I at least knew that none of them was Quartz."

"It would take you about a thousand years to do that, Chick."

"No, it wouldn't. It would take me about a week."

"All right. Go and do it."

"Eh? Are you in earnest?"

"Go and do it."

"All right. I'm off."

"When you finish with the Oranges, if you have discovered no trace of him, try some other suburb, only select it yourself. Don't ask me any questions, and don't come to me for orders. You are sent out to find Quartz, or Zanoni, or both of them, and you are on that job until he is nailed. Understand?"

"Yes."

"As you go out, send Patsy to me."

Five minutes later Patsy put in his appearance.

"Pat-sy," said Nick, "I suppose Chick has told you and Ten-Ichi what I found in Missouri, hasn't he?"

"He has."

"Then you know that Quartz is alive."

"Yes."

"Very well. We've got to find him."

"Sure thing."

"Now, Patsy, if I were not here and was not expected here at all, and you had this case all by your little lonesome, where would you look for Quartz?"

"I'll be blowed if I know."

"But you would have to know in such a case. Remember, I wouldn't be here to think for you. Where would you look for him, Patsy?"

"Among the doctors," replied Patsy, with sudden inspiration.

"Among the doctors? I don't think I understand."

"He'd have a shingle out somewhere. Not under his own name, of course, but he could no more keep away from the practice of his profession, than a duck could keep away from water."

"Not bad. Not bad at all. Tell me how you would conduct the search."

"Why, I'd go to the place where doctors who practice in the city of New York have to register. I'd find out from that record all the latest registrations, and then I'd have all kinds of ailments and visit one after another of them, until I found Quartz."

"And when you'd found him, he'd know you in a minute, and he'd proceed to knock you on the head and put you away where you would keep cool; eh?"

"Supposing he did. If I did not return here, you would know I had found him, wouldn't you, and you'd know where to look for him yourself."

"Very good! Very good, indeed, Patsy. Go and do it."

"Just the way I said?"

"Exactly the way you said."

"All right. Betcher life I'll find him if he is d the doctor act."

"If you don't run up against him in the city pro you might try the suburbs, Pat."

"All right."

"You are on this case to a finish, now. I d want to see you again until somebody has fo Quartz or Zanoni, and if you find one you will fin other."

"All right. I'm off."

"As you go out, send Ten-Ichi to me."

"Yes, sir."

Five minutes later Ten-Ichi appeared.

"Ten-Ichi," said Nick, "do you think you could Quartz?"

"I don't know, chief."

"I don't mean to-day, or to-morrow, or next w or any time at all. I mean do you think you can him between now and the time you are called up die?"

"I think I can. Yes, sir."

"That is the way to talk. Now, how would you about it?"

"I wouldn't look for him at all; I would look for woman, Zanoni."

"Splendid! Where would you look for her?"

"Zanoni is a beautiful woman, chief," began T Ichi, slowly.

"You are right, she is."

"I have noticed her hair every time I have seen h It is beautiful hair."

"So it is, Ten-Ichi; very beautiful."

"I have noticed, also, that she always has it done a professional hairdresser. No living woman e ever do her own hair the way she has here done."

"Splendid! Splendid! Go on."

"Zanoni flits about too much to keep a maid;

...des, in noticing her hair, I have also noticed that ...s not been done twice by the same person. I have ...ays thought that a woman's hair is her principal ...k of beauty, next to her eyes, and therefore I al... make a study of their hair."

"Not at all a bad idea; go on."

"Very well. If she does not keep a maid, and it is ... at all likely that she does, she applies to some pro...al hairdresser in every city where she happens ...e staying. Zanoni is very proud of her hair."

"She has a right to be."

"I would therefore visit every professional hair...sser in the city, one after another. After I had ...austed them, if I was still unsuccessful, I would go ... the suburbs and to the adjacent and contiguous ...s. I'd begin, say, at the Fifth Avenue Hotel. I'd ...e an imaginary circle from there, and I'd follow ... circle, constantly widening it, until I discovered ... hairdresser I was seeking, if it took me all the way ... own country before I had finished."

"Ten-Ichi, I think you have hit upon an idea."

"It is dead sure to bring something if you give it ..."

"I think it is."

"Zanoni has her hair done by a professional; some...ere in the world there is always a professional hair...sser who is attending to it. That hairdresser can ... found."

"Exactly. But after you have found the right one, ... are you going to know it? You cannot sit around ...iting for the customers to show up one by one; be...es, I am told that some women wear bags over their ...ds at night and have their hair done only about ... a week."

"I don't know now just how I would manage that ... of it; but I would end by discovering Zanoni."

"You can do it, Ten-Ichi."

"It will take time, sir."

"Go and do it, if it takes the rest of your natural life."

"In that case, I can accomplish it."

"Don't let me see or hear from you again until something is accomplished, or until one of us has found Quartz or Zanoni; but if you should happen to hear such a thing, come in."

"I will do it."

"Good boy, Ten-Ichi. I shouldn't wonder if you would succeed quicker than you think—or, at least, quicker than I think. Go and do it."

CHAPTER X.

A MAN WHO IS OFFICIALLY DEAD.

"Every one of those proposed methods of search is a good one," mused the detective, when he was again alone. "Ten-Ichi's is probably the best and the surest of results.

"My own way is to appear to do nothing; to sit here quietly at home, now that the house is repaired so that I can live in it, and wait for one of them to show a hand, for show a hand they will before long. They could no more leave me alone than Quartz could stop murdering.

"Besides, the veiled threats in that letter of Zanoni's were not idle by any means. She meant what she said, and she will attack me if I give her time.

"It seems rather foolish to sit here and wait for her to attack when I have not the least idea how she will begin, and when I know that she is likely to blow me into eternity the first time I step out of doors; but it is the best way, after all."

Nevertheless, three weeks went by without a sign of any kind from Zanoni, or from Quartz.

Since the day when Nick had sent each of his assistants away on their several duties, he had not seen nor heard a word from any of them, save now and then

a slip of paper inclosed in an envelope came to him through the mail. That slip of paper always contained merely one word, and that one word was always "Chick" or "Patsy" or "Ten-Ichi."

These were sent merely to let him know that they were still at work and were also still alive.

"Three weeks," mused Nick, that morning. "Well, I am about tired of sitting down and doing nothing. I rather think I'll have to get out and do some hustling myself."

That same evening, shortly after dark, he entered the Hotel Mammoth, and strolled through the café to the billiard room.

He noticed, as soon as he entered the room, that especial interest seemed to have gathered a group of spectators around the vicinity of one table, and he strolled across the room in order to be also an observer.

Two players were engaged in a game of billiards, and one of them was in the act of making a difficult shot as he approached, and he noticed the shot rather than the man who was about to play.

But when the shot—a difficult massé—executed a marvelous curve, darted out almost to the center of the table, turned and came back again and counted, he looked to see who it was who had proved himself such a master of the cue.

Then he started; and well he might, for he was looking straight into the eyes of Dr. Quartz, and Dr. Quartz was returning his stare with one equally as severe.

The smile was absent from the doctor's face for once, at least, and Nick instantly saw that he intended to bluff on the scene.

"He'll find that the game of bluff is one which two can play at," was the mental comment which ran through the detective's brain.

Nick had started forward, and was now in the front of the circle which surrounded the table. He and the doctor were still staring at each other, and the doc had also taken a step in Nick's direction, so that attention of the spectators was called to the two

"Why do you venture to stare at me like that, s demanded the doctor, as he confronted the detect and Nick Carter's reply was to strike out with his so suddenly, and with such terrific force, that the tor was lifted from his feet and knocked backw so that his head went under the table. And as delivered the blow, he exclaimed:

"I'll show you first, and explain afterward!"

Instantly the billiard room was a scene of turmo

The spectators who had been watching the g with unusual interest, started angrily toward Nick. there is no doubt that they would have given trouble if he had not thrown wide his coat and hibited the badge which he sometimes wore concea on his suspender.

And then, before the doctor had time to rise, eve he could have done so after the blow fell upon Nick turned and clapped handcuffs on his wrists. called to the hotel detective, who had suddenly peared, to assist him in taking his prisoner from room.

"Get me a cab," he said. "I want this man at p headquarters with all possible speed. As soon have started, you telephone to the inspector that I on my way there, and that I have an important one."

In the meantime the angry guests were crowd forward, more insistent than ever that a wrong been done to the billiard player; but, Nick turned faced them.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I beg that you will co your excitement, for I shall keep my prisoner if I to clear the room to do it. This man whom I arrested, is a murderer, and I am Nick Carter. S aside, if you please, and let me pass."

And they did stand aside, without a word of remonstrance.

The doctor was still groggy from the effects of the blow, and he offered no resistance when Nick, assisted by the hotel detective, led him away toward the entrance.

"Would you like to have me ride down with you?" asked that personage, when they were at the cab.

"No," replied Nick. "You attend to the telephone message. Thank you all the same."

"Quartz," said Nick, when they were inside the cab together, "I'm not going to talk, and so you need not waste any breath. But I am done with fooling with you. This pistol on my knee is all ready to fire, and it is a hair trigger. You know the rest. I won't kill you, either, if you make any breaks; but I'll agree to shoot you badly."

So the drive was taken in silence.

In the office of the inspector it was different.

Quartz had quite recovered his cool imperturbability by that time, and when he was led into the presence of the inspector, he bowed and smiled with the air of a Chesterfield, although there was an ugly blue swelling on one side of his jaw, where Nick had struck him.

Seated in a chair, confronting the two men, he was thoroughly himself again; and he listened with apparent interest while Nick recounted all he had done in order to satisfy himself that the doctor was alive.

"And now, inspector," he concluded, "here he is."

"What have you got to say for yourself, Quartz?" asked the inspector.

"Merely that I am legally dead, and that you have no power to arrest or confine me," replied the doctor, coolly. "I have been hanged once and pronounced dead by the physicians who were official witnesses at the execution. The State has said that I am dead. The law says that I am dead. It is certain that you cannot [illegible]. There is no law to cover the ground, and there is no precedent for such a case. You are disarmed, Mr. Inspector, and so are you, Mr. Carter. Until I have committed another crime which you can prove, you have no power over me. You cannot hold me."

He leaned back in his chair and added:

"Would one of you be so kind as to give me a cigar? Mr. Carter's fist made such an impression on my face that it pains me. I think a cigar would soothe it. Of course," he added, after he had lighted the cigar which the inspector gave him, "you have me now. I am handcuffed and I cannot get away. You can lock me up and you can keep me, perhaps for a day or two, but you cannot hold me. My lawyer——"

"Enough of this twaddle," interrupted Nick, impatiently. "What you say is true, and I know it to be true. That is why I knocked you down, and waited till later to make the explanation. But, doctor, there is a little matter over here at the hospital, concerning the death of a nurse, which Zanoni was foolish enough to write to me about. I think we can bring that home to you."

The doctor shrugged his shoulders wearily.

"You forget that I am dead," he said. "And, besides, I have an absolutely perfect alibi."

"I'll lock him up, anyhow," said the inspector. "And I will keep him, too, as long as he can be kept. I think, doctor," he added, "that we can have a *lunatico inquirendo* sit on your case, and if we can't do anything else with you, we can ship you off to Dannemora, where they have accommodations for the criminal insane."

The doctor shrugged his shoulders again.

"Perhaps," he said. "But what will my lawyer be doing in the meantime?"

"You just ask that question of him when you see him," said Nick.

Dr. Quartz was taken downstairs to one of the

strongest cells, a special guard was placed over him, and Nick and the inspector returned to the latter's private office.

"The old fiend is right, Nick," said the inspector. "It is a question in my mind if we can hold him at all, save as a dangerous person; and that will be merely a matter of a short time, when he will be set at liberty again. Missouri can't do anything with him. He is dead out there. The State has pronounced him dead, and you can't try a dead man."

"I knew all that before," said Nick. "That is why I have kept so still about it. I wished to get him here first, and do the talking afterward."

"We can have him declared a lunatic and send him to Dannemora. The history of his crimes will warrant that."

There was a rap against the door at that moment, and the inspector shouted for whoever was outside to enter.

The door opened, and Ten-Ichi entered the room.

He stopped suddenly when he discovered that Nick was there, and then, advancing to the middle of the room, he addressed the inspector:

"Sir," he said, "I have brought a prisoner to you. She is in the outer room. She is the same who escaped from the criminal ward of the hospital, after murdering the night nurse."

"Zanoni?" exclaimed the inspector.

Ten-Ichi bowed; then he turned to his own chief.

"We were all successful, sir," he said. "We all found what we were seeking. Chick found his new partner of a neighborhood, through consulting with the real-estate agents; Patsy discovered a certain Dr. Meredith, who turned out to be Dr. Quartz, and I found a hairdresser who ultimately led me to Zanoni."

"What is all that?" asked the inspector.

"We all arrived at our destinations—which in each case was the same," continued Ten-Ichi, imperturbably, "at about the same time. At least, we all met there; and it is fortunate that we did, for it took all three of us to capture Zanoni. She fought like a tigress."

"But what of the doctor himself? Did you capture him also?" asked Nick, without a smile.

"Unfortunately, no. He was not there; but he will return in the course of time. Chick and Patsy are waiting there in the house for him."

"He is already here," said Nick. "I found him and brought him here just now. But you have done well all of you. Mighty well, and I am proud of you."

"Thank you, sir."

"Go back to the house, after you have brought Zanoni in here to us, and tell Chick to go through it from top to bottom, and to make a note of everything he finds. But wait a moment. Where is the house?"

"In Thirty-fourth Street, near Ninth Avenue."

"So near," said Nick.

"Bring Zanoni in here, Ten-Ichi," said the inspector. "Let us see what she has to say for herself."

And, a moment later, Zanoni was dragged rather than led into the room.

She was shrieking and otherwise comporting herself like a madwoman, and indeed she seemed to be utterly mad.

An officer was on either side of her, holding her; and yet it was all they could do with their united efforts to restrain her.

"That dodge won't do, Zanoni," said Nick. "You cannot escape the electric chair by that sort of mock bank acting."

She glared at the detective, and then burst into a peal of maniacal laughter which made the detective shudder.

"That was a nice letter you wrote to me," said Nick, again trying to induce her to speak; but she only burst into another peal of wild laughter, and then tempted to throw herself on the floor.

"Take her away!" ordered the inspector; then he turned to Nick.

"It looks as if we would have two cases for Dannemora," he said.

THE END.

Next week's issue, No. 418, will contain "The Pale Demon; or, The Ghost of Dr. Quartz."

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